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Sustainable development: promotion of new and renewable sources of energy

Letter dated 15 October 2007 from the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith the "Damascus declaration" on the role of renewable energy and energy efficiency for the future cooperation between the European Union and the countries of the Middle East and North Africa (see annex). The Damascus declaration was adopted at the end of the fourth Middle East and North Africa Renewable Energy Conference, which was held in Damascus from 21 to 24 June 2007 under the main theme "The way forward for renewable energy development and technology transfer: Cooperation between the European Union and the countries of the Middle East and North Africa". The conference was organized by the Ministry of Electricity of the Syrian Arab Republic, represented by the National Energy Research Centre, in cooperation with the Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety of Germany, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), supported by the New and Renewable Energy Authority of Egypt, the National Energy Research Centre of Jordan and the Euro-Arab Cooperation Centre. It was attended by ministers, heads of delegations and representatives from 38 countries, including representatives of 19 national, international and regional organizations, and 15 ministers.

I should appreciate it if you would circulate the present letter and its annex as a document of the General Assembly under agenda item 54 (i), "Sustainable development: promotion of new and renewable sources of energy", which was allocated to the Second Committee.

(*Signed*) Bashar **Ja'afari**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the letter dated 15 October 2007 from the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Damascus declaration on the role of renewable energy and energy efficiency for future cooperation between the European Union and the countries of the Middle East and North Africa

Conclusions and recommendations from the fourth Middle East and North Africa Renewable Energy Conference

We, the Ministers, heads of delegations and representatives from 38 countries, including 19 national and international organizations, 15 ministers, 7 from countries in Europe and the Middle East and North Africa, convening at the fourth Middle East and North Africa Renewable Energy Conference, held at Damascus and Palmyra from 21 to 24 June 2007, under the main theme, "The way forward for renewable energy development and technology transfer: Cooperation between the European Union and the countries of the Middle East and North Africa":

Recalling the Abu Dhabi Declaration on Environment and Energy 2003, the outcomes of the first Middle East and North Africa Renewable Energy Conference, held in Sana'a in 2004, the second Middle East and North Africa Renewable Energy Conference, held in Amman in 2005, the third Middle East and North Africa Renewable Energy Conference, held in Cairo in 2006; the World Summit on Sustainable Development, held in Johannesburg in 2002, the International Conference for Renewable Energies, held in Bonn in 2004, the Beijing International Renewable Energy Conference, held in Beijing in 2005 and the ninth special session of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), held in Dubai in 2006, as well as the Declaration of Berlin 2007 on the role of renewable energy and energy efficiency and the fifteenth session of the Commission for Sustainable Development in 2007,

Aware of the rapidly growing demand for energy to satisfy the sustainable development needs in the countries of the Middle East and North Africa, and of the rising energy prices,

Acknowledging the recent technological advancement in several renewable energy technologies, the abundant renewable resources in the Middle East and North Africa region and the consequent opportunities for widespread applications,

Concerned about global warming and climate change and related adverse impacts,

Recognizing that renewable energy development and energy efficiency measures can strongly contribute to climate protection, energy security, job creation and sustainable economic development,

Realizing the need in the Middle East and North Africa region for technology transfer and the opportunities for cooperation between the European Union and the countries of the Middle East and North Africa, with benefits for both, utilizing instruments such as the European Neighbourhood Policy,

Noting that the countries of the Middle East and North Africa region have stressed their commitment to take necessary measures and develop competent plans

to enhance renewable energies in their countries' energy portfolios, as appropriate to each country's resources and needs, and through the establishment of regional markets,

Acknowledging the initiative of the Government of Germany to support the establishment of a regional renewable energy centre of excellence in Egypt, call on the countries of the Middle East and North Africa, concerned national institutions and regional organizations to work closely together with the centre,

In discussing the role of renewable energy and energy efficiency in the context of sustainable development needs of the countries of the Middle East and North Africa and future cooperation between the European Union and Middle East and North Africa, we recommend that:

1. The Conference underline the need to diversify energy resources and underscore the considerable potential that renewable energy and energy efficiency have on achieving sustainable development;

2. The Conference call upon all of the participating countries to set national targets for renewable energy deployment and energy efficiency measures. In order to meet these targets, appropriate policy instruments and economic incentives should be adopted;

3. The Conference support the use of all forms of renewable energy, in particular large-scale renewable energy systems such as solar, thermal and wind, in the countries of the Middle East and North Africa to satisfy their own energy needs as well as for export to European countries. With this vision in mind, much larger investments are needed to establish the necessary infrastructure for interconnections between Europe and the countries of the Middle East and North Africa;

4. The Conference agree that concerted global action to promote renewable energy and energy efficiency is needed. In this context, regional and global cooperation on the optimization of national support schemes, the exchange of best practices, "know-how" and technical progress through bilateral and regional arrangements and governmental, non-governmental, local government institutions and partnerships, including the Renewable Energy Policy for the Twenty-first Century, the Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Partnership, the Mediterranean Renewable Energy Programme, the Johannesburg Renewable Energy Coalition, the Global Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy Fund, the Information Gateway for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency and the World Renewable Energy Network, are important;

5. The Conference stress the need for developed countries and regional and international financing institutions, such as the World Bank, the European Investment Bank and Arab funds, to scale up their technical and financial assistance to countries in the Middle East and North Africa region for renewable energy programmes, including technology transfer, indigenization and capacity-building, to support local manufacture of components of renewable energy systems;

6. The Conference recognize the need for significant financial resources, both public and private, to be invested in renewable energy. This should include the use of innovative financing mechanisms and market-based instruments, such as the Clean Development Mechanism, as well as use of the Global Environment Facility, which covers the incremental cost of renewable energy and energy efficiency.

Conference participants are committed to creating the appropriate conditions for positive investment in energy efficiency and renewable energies to attract private capital for investments;

7. The Conference call upon renewable energy manufacturers, in particular manufacturers of wind turbines, to expand their industrial base in order to meet energy demand and to reduce prices;

8. The Conference call upon countries in the region, regional and international organizations, the private sector and non-governmental organizations to put more emphasis on developing and implementing educational and public awareness programmes on renewable energy and energy efficiency technologies and applications in the Middle East and North Africa region;

9. The Conference, taking into consideration the needs of different social categories, particularly the poor, advise the countries of the Middle East and North Africa to work on energy pricing systems that bring social justice, and induce economic development and climate protection;

10. The Conference express its appreciation and compliments to the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic for the organization of the fourth Middle East and North Africa Renewable Energy Conference, and the intensive governmental plans for the development of renewable energy with support of the European Union countries. The participants also thank the Prime Minister of the Syrian Arab Republic, the Syrian Ministry of Electricity, represented by National Energy Research Centre, and the other coorganizers of the conference, including the German Ministry of Environment, Natural Conservation and Nuclear Safety, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, and the United Nations Environment Programme for the efforts exerted and the support extended in holding such a successful conference and in bringing about such constructive outcomes;

11. The Conference express its gratitude to the Moroccan delegation for its proposal to host the fifth Middle East and North Africa Renewable Energy Conference in 2008, and to the delegation of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya for its offer to host the sixth Middle East and North Africa Renewable Energy Conference in 2009.

Damascus, 24 June 2007